

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Final Report

for the period

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Save the Children

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Table of Contents

	Acronyms	3
I.	Introduction	4
II.	Activities	6
III.	Results	6
	▪ Democratic Governance	9
	▪ Sound Management Practices	9
	▪ Women in Leadership Positions	9
	▪ Pursuing Civic Action/Systematic Civic Action	10
	▪ Mobilizing non-Member, non-USAID Resources	10
	▪ Federations/Intermediary NGOs Working Together Systematically to Resolve Serious Environmental Constraints	11
	▪ Knowledge of Rights/Obligations in Relation to Local Government	11
IV.	Success Stories	12
V.	Synergy and Partnerships	14
VI.	Challenges Encountered/Lessons Learned	15
VII.	Sustainability	17

List of Acronyms

AF	Association Féminine
ACODEP	Appui aux Collectivités Décentralisées pour un Développement Participatif
ACOD-Nietaso	Action-Conseil pour le Développement
Acte-sept	Troupe de théâtre
AFAICO	Association des Formateurs pour l'Appui aux Initiatives Communautaires
AFAM	Association des Formateurs en Alphabétisation du Mali
APC	Association des Producteurs du Cotton
APE	Association des Parents d'Élèves
ASACO	Association de Santé Communautaire
AV	Association Villageoise
CAFO	Coordination des Associations et ONG Féminines du Mali
CCC	Centre de Conseil Communal
CEPROCIDE	Centre de Promotion de la Citoyenneté pour le Développement Durable à la Base
CGCOM	Comité de gestion d'école communautaire
CMDT	Compagnie Malienne de Développement des Textiles
CO	Community Organization
DG	Democratic Governance
FELASCOM	Fédération Locale des ASACOs
FERK	Fédération des Relais de Kolondiéba
GA	General Assembly
GGLS	Group Guaranteed Lending and Savings (Women's Solidarity Credit Groups)
ICPM	Infirmier Chef de Poste Médicale
JIGIYA	Well-digging Cooperative
OMAES	Oeuvre Malienne d'Aide à l'Enfance du Sahel
PAD	Programme d'Appui à la Décentralisation
PAI-eau	Programme d'Appui Institutionnel à l'Eau
PAIP	Programme d'Appui aux Initiatives Privées
PGR	Projet de Gestion Rural
SC	Save the Children
SETADE	Société d'Etude pour l'Assistance au Développement
SENASIGI	Gardening Cooperative
SLACAEER	Service Local d'Appui Conseil, d'Aménagement et de l'Équipement Rural
SMC	School Management Committee
SRI	Statuts et Règlements Intérieur (Internal Rules and Regulations)
VA	Village Association
ZAER	Local Development Representative of CMDT

I. Introduction

For the past five years, Save the Children/USA has implemented the USAID-funded *Democratic Governance* program in the *cercles* of Bougouni and Kolondïèba in Sikasso region. Since the project start in 1997, SC with its partners Consortium 3A (in 1999) and CEPROCIDE (Centre de Promotion de la Citoyenneté pour le Développement Durable à la Base, from January 2000 to project end) have worked with civil society organizations, strengthening and supporting them to take their rightful place in Mali's newly decentralized political landscape.

In 1999, the program supported 205 community-based organizations and federations in the communes of Mena, Kebila, Kolosso, Kadiana, and Fakola. From January 2000, the project scope was enlarged to include 144 organizations in the remaining seven communes of Kolondïèba *cercle*: Tousseguéla, Tiongui, Nangalasso, Bougoula, Farako, Kolondïèba and N'Golodiana. Then, in 2001, the program was again extended, this time to the Bougouni *cercle*, with 19 participating communes (Bougouni, Kola, Sido, Kokélé, Kéléya, Ourou, Siyentoula, Dogo, Méridiela, Zantiébougou, Garalo, Défina, Bladiè-Tièmala, Tièmala Banimonotiè, Yiridougou, Faradjelen, Kouroulamini, Danou, and Faragouaran) serving 387 additional organizations. Thus, in total, the program has worked with 734 civil society organizations and federations in 31 communes.

These communities are characterized by a largely agricultural base, strongly oriented to cotton production. The region's reliance on cotton has at times caused economic and food security problems, as in 2001 when farmers ceased production in protest of poor prices, and in 2002, when poor rains negatively affected yields. Bordering Ivory Coast, the region is strongly affected by that country's pull, which results in significant labor out-migration, particularly of young people. These communities are also characterized by strong traditions, and a male-dominated, gerontocratic social organization in which the voices of women and youth are seldom heard.

The following table summarizes the number and type of community organizations with which the program has worked over the past five years.

Community organizations supported by SC's DG program, 1997-2003

COMMUNES	AF	APE	APC	ASACO	AV	CGECOM	Coop.M.F	GVM	SORO YIRIWASO	OTHERS	TOTAL
BLADIE TIEMALA		1	7		2			1			11
BOUGOULA		1				3		1	1		6
BOUGOUNI	19			3			1	2			25
DANOU	1	1	5	1	7						15
DEFINA		2	3		9			1			15
DOGO	6		11	3	5			1			26
FAKOLA			3	2	17	11		3	3		39
FARADJELEN		1			6			2			9
FARAGOUARAN		1	1	1	5						8
FARAKO		1		2		9		3	2		17
GARALO	1	1	8	1	38			11		4	64
KADIANA				1	22	13		3			39
KEBILA				2	28	25		7	10		72
KELEYA	3	1		1	15			1			21
KOKELE					8			2			10
KOLA					4			5			9
KOLOGO	1		6	1	15			11			34
KOLON DIEBA	2				3	31		16	7		59
KOLOSSO	1				10	10		3			24
KOUROULAMINI	4	1			5						10
MENA		1	1	2	13	6					22
MERIDIELA		2			18						20
N'GOLODIANA		1		1		4					6
NANGALASSO		1		1		5					7
OUROUN		1	2	1	9						13
SIDO	3	1	4	1	19			7			35
SIENTOULA		1	3		11						15
TIONGUI		1		1	1	6		2	2		13
TOUSSEGUELA		1		1	1	7		8			18
YIRIDOU GOU		3	8	1	11			1			24
ZANTIEBOUGOU	1		2	1	20			4			28
Total	42	24	64	28	302	130	1	95	25	4	715

Federations supported by SC's DG program, 1997-2003

COMMUNES	SECTORS						TOTAL
	APE	SENASSIGI	JIGIYA	FASO JIGI	FELASCOM	Multi-Functional Cooperative	
BOUGOUNI	2	2	1	1	1	1	8
FAKOLA	1						1
GARALO				1			1
KEBILA	1			1			2
KOLON DIEBA	3	1	1	1	1		7
Total	7	3	2	4	2	1	19

II. Activities

As in past years, through a process of analyzing the data collected (in December 2002), SC's DG program staff developed a *Plan de Correction des Faiblesses (PCF)*. On the basis of this plan, the following activities were carried out during this past and final semester:

- Community discussion days held at the communal level, attended by communal level authorities, *relais*, civil society organization representatives and traditional leaders on development issues and, in particular, taxation;
- Support to Civic Action Center *relais* ;
- A forum for women's organizations, which provided training on project development and negotiation skills to establish partnerships;
- Regular exchanges with *relais* about the challenges they face, and their role post-project;
- Design and publication of an information booklet/agenda for all community *relais*; and
- Distribution to community *relais* of documentation on strategic planning.

III. Results

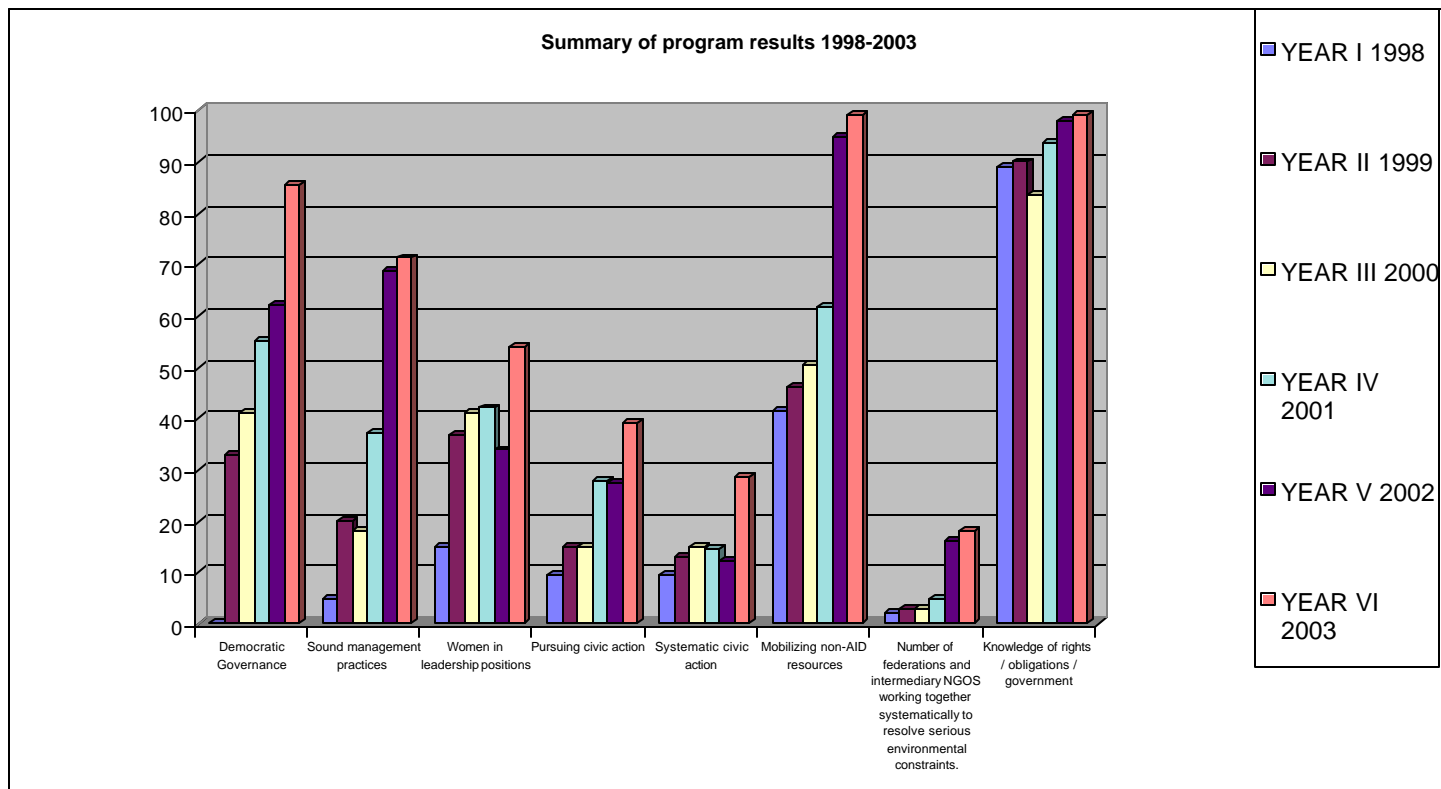
USAID's *Democratic Governance* team was developed in response (among other things) to the clear need for support to community organizations with the overall goal of building a strong and participating civil society. The characteristics of a typical community organization in 1997 were:

- Weak internal structure;
- Lack of administrative and financial management tools;
- Lack of understanding of internal governance issues, roles, and responsibilities;
- Complete absence of by-laws and regulations, and lack of legal recognition;
- Organization leaders appointed (or self-appointed) and serving for indeterminate periods;
- Lack of transparency in organization management due to the absence of essential documents such as meeting minutes, financial reports, activity reports, and strategic plans;
- Low literacy rate;
- Strong dependence on local AVs;
- Lack of income-generating activities; and
- Weak negotiation capacity.

The following table, summarizing five years of program results, shows remarkable progress in a number of key areas. Though challenges certainly remain, it is evident that the majority of organizations which participated in this program are more democratic and better managed, are more participatory and have more confidence and skill to undertake both advocacy and resource diversification activities.

Results: Cooperative Agreement Program Indicators

Indicators	YEAR I 1998		YEAR II 1999		YEAR III 2000		YEAR IV 2001		YEAR V 2002		YEAR VI 2003	
	Expected Results	Results Achieved	Expected Results	Results Achieved	Expected Results	Results Achieved	Expected Results	Results Achieved	Expected Results	Results Achieved	Expected Results	Results Achieved
% of COs which are democratically governed	10%	0%	25%	33%	40%	41.23%	50%	55.28%	60%	62.3%	65%	85.6%
%of COs with sound management practices	20%	4.76%	40%	20%	50%	18.19%	65%	37.27%	50%	68.9%	55%	71.3%
% of COs having one woman in a leadership position	15%	15%	35%	37%	45%	41.01%	55%	42.06%	70%	33.9%	75%	54,10
% of COs pursuing civic action	10%	9.72%	20%	15%	30%	15.15%	35%	27.95%	35%	27.3%	50%	39.3%
% of COs pursuing systematic civic action	10%	9.39%	20%	13%	30%	14.84%	35%	14.60%	30%	28.6%	35%	28.6%
% of COs mobilizing non-USAID resources	20%	41.66%	40%	46%	50%	50.3%	65%	61.8%	75%	94.8%	75%	99.3%
Number of federations and intermediary NGOs working together systematically to resolve serious environmental constraints	2	2	3	3	5	3	7	5	9	16	10	18
% of COs with knowledge of rights / obligations in relation to local government	20%	88.99%	30%	90%	50%	83.64%	65%	93.79%	85%	98.1%	90%	99%



Democratic Governance

The principle of democratic governance has been successfully internalized for 85.6% of community organizations in this program. In particular, the program has focused on strengthening participatory management techniques and on encouraging organizations to formalize their structures through statutes, regulations and formal recognition from communal authorities. Organizations regularly take minutes and produce activity reports (85.6% versus 62.3% in 2002). A challenge still remaining is for organizations to hold more regular general assemblies and board meetings – only 65% of organizations hold regular assemblies, and 75% regular board meetings. This is partly due to time constraints. As well, we note that consensus decision-making is still preferred over voting; this reflects the strong emphasis on harmony that is characteristic of our target communities.

Sound Management Practices

Based on successful literacy campaigns which gave participants the confidence and skill to keep written records, we are pleased to report very good results for this indicator. More than 71% of community organizations showed proof of sound management practices, in particular relating to the management of organization finances, equipment, and materials. Accounting and financial management tools were made available to these organizations and are regularly used. Strategic plans are developed by most organizations, and activities are regularly monitored to gauge progress. This indicator's significant rise from 2001 (37.27%) reflects the extra emphasis placed on this indicator by the program in the last two years of the project. Resource availability is a serious constraint to further progress in financial management by community organizations; as well, a number of organizations' financial management soundness is constrained by issues of transparency, in that these organizations continue to be run by strong individuals rather than by a more participatory structure.

Women in Leadership Positions

In order to achieve truly participatory local governance, one of the program's main objectives was to increase opportunities for women's participation and to strengthen women's capacity to effectively participate in local-level decision-making. Activities directed at both men and women were undertaken, for the most part awareness-raising activities on gender, which stressed that sound decision-making is best served by inclusion, in order that the maximum amount of information is made available. It is clear from the indicator that progress in this area has not been as good as expected; indeed, the results from year to year have been choppy: In 2001, 42% of organizations had women in leadership

positions, but this dropped to 33.9% in 2002, only to rise this past semester to 54.1%. We are confident that the models of the president of Faso Jigi in Kolondieba, or the presidents of the SMCs of Dialakoro and Djissan, will serve to inspire other women to step forward. However, it is clear that more work on gender awareness and skills strengthening for women will be needed. In particular, support to women's federations should be continued as they grow and re-structure. This past semester, the program facilitated discussions at CAFO, after a number of women's associations elected to leave the structure to form their own, separate federation. In general, communication issues in such federations, particularly between boards and members, need to be dealt with.

Pursuing Civic Action/ Systematic Civic Action

Over the course of the program, numerous activities have been organized to promote advocacy and civic action, such as trainings, exchange visits, radio broadcasts, and community fora. Results for this indicator this past semester are encouraging in that it is the first year that results exceeded the target of 35% (27.95% in 2001, 27.30% in 2002 and 39.30% this year). We observe that communities are still quite timid when it comes to advocating to state or communal representatives about their needs. However, we noted a few encouraging examples which, as in the case with women leaders, we hope will serve as a model to other communities. In particular, the evolution of the role of community *relais* is worth noting. Communal and traditional authorities have come to recognize the value-added of community *relais*; in some communities, agreements have been reached to allow *relais* to earn some income from lending documents available at the Civic Action Centers that they run. In exchange, these *relais* have committed to seeking financial partners to support community representatives in covering the recurrent costs of the centers. In Madina, the management committee of the Civic Action Center came to an agreement with the local NGO *Jeunesse et Développement*, which also has its own democratic governance program including centers similar to the ones in this program. In order to avoid duplication, the NGO and the management committee signed an agreement to cooperate in that community.

Mobilizing non- Member, non- USAID Resources

Though unfortunate, recent crises such as the cotton crisis of 2001 and the Ivory Coast crisis of 2002 seem to have galvanized community organizations to redouble their fundraising efforts. A remarkable increase can be noted, from 61.8% of organizations mobilizing non-USAID resources in 2001, to 99.3% this past semester. Community organizations now charge for services they provide, engage in income-generating activities and so on, in order to meet recurrent

costs and for the pursuit of activities identified in their strategic plans. These actions tend to reinforce the autonomy of these organizations and their sustainability. However, it is clear that resource mobilization has not been sufficient in most cases for organizations to achieve all their objectives.

In this light, it may be that the program's efforts to train CSOs in project development and negotiation can be further exploited. For example, the Bougouni FELASCOM successfully obtained funding from OMAES for a project to disseminate information on Decree 02-314, regarding the provision of health services. The Bougouni *Coopérative Multifonctionnelle* recently obtained a loan of one million FCFA from the BNDA for a livestock project, from which the association has already generated a profit of 200,000 FCFA.

Number of Federations and Intermediary NGOS Working Together Systematically to Resolve Serious Environmental Constraints

At the beginning of the program in 1998, in addition to grassroots community organizations, Save the Children worked to promote collaboration between two federations of community organizations: Senasigi and Jigiya. Over the life of the project, the two federations in 1998 have grown to 18 federations in 2003. This is due to the expansion of the operational zone from 5 to 12 communes in the *cercle* of Kolondieba and to 19 communes in the *cercle* of Bougouni. The range of federated community organizations now extends from primary school *APEs* in the *ex-arrondissements* of Kolondieba and Bougouni, to Faso Jigi and the *Coopérative Multifonctionnelle des Femmes* in Bougouni. The development of federations of COs and their commitment to the spirit of the program has permitted grassroots COs to successfully carry out civic actions with the support of their parent federations.

Knowledge of Rights / Obligations in Relation to Local Government

The significant regular overachievements of expected results for this indicator clearly demonstrates the depth of community understanding regarding citizen rights and obligations, achieved through training and public fora, where rights and responsibilities have been discussed. (Success stories of people who immediately paid back taxes after such events have been detailed in previous reports.)

A long history of distrustful relationships between citizens and elected and government officials has been difficult to overcome. The trainings and discussions which this program carried out over the last five years has helped to more firmly root the achievements noted by this indicator and which are shown through every civic action or successful advocacy effort undertaken.

IV. Success Stories

A. The Cases of Jigiyiri and the Women's Multifunctional Cooperative of Bougouni:

At the beginning of the program in 1997, enormous difficulties were encountered in working with women's organizations.

These were characterized by:

- ⇒ An informal institutional and organizational character;
- ⇒ Lack of clear development objectives;
- ⇒ Reliance on oral management style; and
- ⇒ A festive character. (The money generated by the groups served to pay for new clothes for special holidays, to organize tea and drumming parties, etc.)

As a result of this program's efforts, a significant organizational change is apparent in all of the women's COs and in particular in Jigiyiri and the Women's Multifunctional Cooperative in Bougouni. Today these two are the models, putting to use all the administrative and financial management tools (official minutes, by-laws, action plans, strategic plans, cash books, check books). In addition, they have left their festive focus to begin actual development activities, benefiting their communities with the funds of their organizations.

Jigiyiri

This association, pioneering treated mosquito nets in the Bougouni area since 2001, has just begun a factory which has produced among other items: .

- Jam from red dâh
- Syrup from dâh
- Packaged millet flour
- Bottled honey

They also promote literacy through classes which they give – currently in member compounds. They are hoping to establish a women's center for these courses along with training in other skills (running a business, etc.).

The Women's Multifunctional Cooperative

Through its action plan, this women's association expects to create a women's training center. They have already acquired a lot of 2,275 m² from the Mayor.

They are:

- Manufacturing soap
- Renting chairs
- Managing a cereals bank
- Providing small loans to women

All these activities took place in Bougouni and, to inspire groups in other parts of Mali, were documented in a television show.

B. The Communal Council of Farako Agrees to Officially Recognize/Work with “Relais”

Following many requests by the communal *relais* to be involved in development activities as resource persons, the Mayor of Farako, after having gathered the opinions of community leaders and elected authorities, added a point relating to the possibilities of collaboration with the *relais* to the agenda for the April 5th session of the Farako Communal Council.

Before the opening of the session, the Mayor requested that the president of the economic, social, and cultural committee meet with the president of the FERK (*Fédération des Relais de Kolondièba*) with the objective of enabling a consequent council discussion of greater depth. These meetings were all documented in a report submitted to the Mayor's office before the April session.

As a result of this thorough and thoughtful preparatory process, the council made a decision regarding collaboration with the *relais*. This decision made the following points:

- The FERK is engaged to facilitate citizens' understanding of the communal messages and decrees;
- The FERK is engaged to become involved in the social mobilization to support Communal Council activities;
- The FERK is engaged to make sure the rate of payment of taxes increases; and
- The Communal Council, for its part, is engaged to make available to the FERK all means possible to facilitate their work.

V. Synergy and Partnerships

As has been reported previously, the DG program has both promoted and benefited from synergies with other SC programs and partners. DG's transversal character has allowed it to act as a catalyst in many sectors, bringing together

actors from a diverse array of sectors to work together toward common goals. Internally at SC, DG introduced the concept of the *Équipe multi disciplinaire d'appui aux communautés (EMAC)*, whereby agents from different sectors working in the same commune met regularly and planned their activities cooperatively. In some communes, these teams were expanded to include field agents from other partners. In general, the DG program has supported other sectors' work with community organizations. In the past semester, the DG program facilitated workshops held under the auspices of SC's agriculture program, at which the issue of loan recovery post-project was discussed. They also supported the introduction of SC's *Saving Newborn Lives* project by organizing introductory and awareness-raising fora.

Throughout the life of the project, SC's DG program has actively sought out partnerships with a wide array of actors working to strengthen civil society in Bougouni and Kolondièba. The benefits of partnership are numerous and include:

- A reduction in redundancy and duplication of efforts;
- Greater consistency of messages, leading to better understanding and stronger feelings of ownership of program objectives by communities;
- Better communication leading to a greater degree of mutual trust established between development agents and communities;
- Roles and responsibilities of all actors in development activities are more clearly defined; and
- Implementation costs are reduced.

In this final summary report, we would like to highlight the success of the *Development Panel*, a forum initiated by SC in 1999, which brings together on a quarterly basis all development partners working in the *cercle*, such as *sous-prefets*, local mayors, CMDT and state service representatives, international and local NGOs, and community-based organizations. Since the beginning, Helvetas' *Programme d'Appui à la Décentralisation (PAD)* and the CMDT have participated in organizing and facilitating these meetings. One of the *Panel's* successes has been to open up the debate on participant per diems; through this forum, agreement was reached on the harmonization of per diem practices. Through the awareness raising which was an indirect result, these panels have also had the effect of increasing the commitment of participants to *Democratic Governance* principles, overcoming the hesitation and fear of a number of actors, notably state representatives, which were obvious at program inception.

VI. Challenges Encountered/ Lessons Learned

Challenges

Challenges faced by the DG program, and which will doubtless continue to bedevil future such initiatives include:

- ⇒ ***The thirst of beneficiaries for per diem:*** Although the DG program successfully changed its policy so that trainings no longer provide per diem but rather provide meals and transportation only, we still detect residual resistance, particularly on the part of some village leaders who like to exercise their authority by deciding who from their community will participate in particular trainings.
- ⇒ ***Constraints faced by women,*** such as workloads, family responsibilities, and lack of access to transport, prevents them from attending training as much as they might like, participation in which would do a lot to increase their confidence to participate in local-level decision-making.
- ⇒ ***Economic context:*** It must be recognized that the region remains heavily dependent on cotton. As the cotton crisis of 2001 demonstrated, poor results from the annual cotton harvest have an immediate and very negative effect on the ability of community organizations to undertake development activities.
- ⇒ ***Continuing conflicts related to the definition of communal boundaries*** (Loi N°96-154) constrain the participation of some community organizations to trainings and activities such as those offered by the DG program. In the villages of Kankelena and Galamina in Danou commune, Kaara in Mena commune, and Bougoula in Sido commune, for example, CSO representatives have been unwilling to attend trainings at the chef lieu de commune, for fear that such participation would appear to legitimize the current communal boundary, with which they disagree.
- ⇒ ***Questions of legitimacy of certain federations:*** Some community-based organizations feel distant from their representative federation, due mostly to how these federations were established and how decisions are made regarding key posts. In certain sectors at the moment, a lack of solidarity between federations and their member organizations is noticeable.

Challenges such as these have been dealt with in the past through the PCF (*Plan de Correction des Faiblesses*), an analysis tool used to correct observed weaknesses. These plans were regularly shared at debates organized at the communal level in which performance of community organizations was analyzed.

Field agents were held accountable, reporting on a quarterly basis the progress achieved addressing constraints and issues such as these.

Lessons Learned

At the end of the current grant, reflecting on the past five years, we have drawn a few conclusions and identified some lessons learned.

- ✚ Firstly, that democratic governance programming is about encouraging people to see themselves as citizens, a process that has only just begun in Mali and will take many more years, given its political history.
- ✚ Secondly, that in order to increase women's participation in local-level decision-making, DG programming needs to include a great deal of gender training, in particular focusing efforts on raising men's awareness of gender issues to obtain their commitment to facilitating women's entry into decision-making positions.
- ✚ Thirdly, that reducing or eliminating per diem for participant trainings is essential to effecting lasting change in local governance; real interest and commitment can be better gauged when trainings are offered without per diem, and participation by beneficiaries on this basis sends a strong signal to other development actors, especially state and communal authorities.
- ✚ Fourthly, that the success of any capacity building activity at the local level is predicated on the need for careful negotiation with local officials prior to the activity taking place. The influence of such leaders is still extremely strong in rural areas, thus it is better to have them on your side.
- ✚ Fifthly, that the effectiveness of development interventions is very much dependent on the existence of dynamic and fluid communication networks between development partners. Effective communications not only help reduce programming costs by reducing redundancy and duplication, but improve engagement and sustainability by making development more consistent in the eyes of beneficiaries.
- ✚ Finally, that the application of democratic governance principles at the local level must rest on approaches that emphasize the concrete, that allows beneficiaries opportunities and spaces to put into practice the concepts that they acquire through training in activities that respond to their needs and aspirations.

VII. Sustainability

At program end, the issue of sustainability is particularly present in the minds of all those who have contributed to the success of this program. From project start-up, SC's DG program has sought to prepare communities for the program's eventual withdrawal, particularly by encouraging and strengthening partnerships as have been described above. Though we feel that more support of a similar kind will be needed over the foreseeable future, we are confident that there exists today a strong base upon which continued progress in DG will be built. ***We would like to highlight three new structures, created during the program, that we feel should be capitalized upon in future DG work.***

Community Relais

In the project implementation zone today exists a cadre of well-trained community *relais*, who are by now well-known and respected by community members and local authorities alike for their knowledge of and commitment to democratic governance. There are 152 *relais* with specific DG training and another 800 literacy *relais*. These *relais* have now joined together in three federations: two DG-*relais* federations, one each in Kolondieba and Bougouni, and AFAM-Sud (*Association des Formateurs d'Alphabétisation du Mali-Sud*) which represents literacy *relais*. These organizations have already established links and in some cases contracts with various localities for the continuing of services post-project.

Civic Action Centers

Begun as a pilot project, there are now eight Civic Action Centers, five in Kolondieba and three in Bougouni. These spaces are sources of information about, and places to debate, current issues in local governance, and are now used as meeting places for local actors to negotiate and come to agreement on local development issues. They have slowly but surely established themselves as an essential element of communal life, manifest by the example of the agreement mentioned above between a center's management committee and the local mayor.

Development Panel and Commune-Level Fora

The *Development Panel* was such a success that participating partners appear committed to continuing the tradition in the near future. In addition to the *cercle*-level panel, the DG program leaves behind in many communities a forum which gathers people together to examine the communal plan. The objective of this forum is to promote community feedback to communal authorities on development plans, and to promote the inclusion of DG activities in future plans.